

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Universal benefits in the spotlight

David Cameron's commitment to maintain universal pensioner benefits if he remains Prime Minister after May 7 has again sparked a debate about a phoney war between the generations.

A number of think-tanks and media commentators were quick to argue that older people were being cushioned from austerity, whilst younger people were struggling.

The group Policy Exchange also argued that people should have to opt-in to receive the winter fuel allowance

and the state pension should be subject to the welfare cap imposed by the government.

Yet the facts don't support the claim that the generations are divided.

Both young and old have a poverty rate of 1 in 5 and they share concerns about housing and public transport.

What really lies behind these attacks is a desire to take the attention away from bankers, financial markets and the City for their role in the economic crisis.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "It wasn't pensioners who



caused the crisis, yet we seem to be taking the blame."

"We're fed up with being told we're getting something for nothing, when every year our

generation puts back £40bn into society more than we receive in pensions, benefits and care through our taxes, volunteering and unpaid caring."

Maintaining universal pensioner benefits makes economic sense when they allow older people to give back £40bn to society every year
© NPC

Hospitals paid to keep pensioners in beds

A payment by results system offers financial incentives for hospitals to keep older patients in bed, according to a new report from Anchor.

The charity argues that cuts to the social care budget have led to a reduction in the support available to older people when they get out of hospital.

As a result, older patients are kept on wards when they no longer need medical care, while hospital trusts take money for them from the local authority.

Around 680,000 people a year, most of them older, have a delayed discharge from hospital, whilst in the community, around 1m older people are being denied the support they need with washing, going to the toilet, eating, dressing and getting out of bed.

Little wonder then that 1 in 10 of those aged 75 and over that are admitted to hospital have potentially avoidable conditions.

Campaigners also fear that keeping older people in hospital unnecessarily puts them at risk

of infection.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "It's a disgrace that older people are effectively being held prisoner, trapped in hospital beds when they should be receiving more appropriate care out in the community."

The NPC continues to argue that the current social care system is in crisis and needs to be transformed into a National Health and Care Service, funded through taxation, that offers quality care both in hospital and at home.



National Pensioners Convention

Walkden House,
10 Melton Street,
London NW1 2EJ
T: 020-7383-0388
E: admin@npcuk.org
W: npcuk.org

Campaign Dates

People's March for the NHS

The group that organised the march last year from Jarrow to London in support of the NHS is now planning a series of rallies across the country. Events will take place in Bristol on 14 March, Nottingham 27 March, Hinchingsbrooke 28 March and London 11 April. See www.peoplesvoteofnhs.org.uk for more information.

General Election

7 May: The NPC has produced a Pensioners' Manifesto which it is asking local groups to put to their main candidates. Copies available from the NPC office.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2015

16-18 June: Annual gathering in Blackpool with a range of guest speakers on various topics, plus entertainment and an exhibition area. Tickets priced £8.

Will the new cap on social care costs, fit?

From April 2016, the government claims the costs of social care will be capped at £72,000.

However, the actual system won't be as straightforward as it sounds.

To start with, you have to get into the system and only individuals deemed eligible for care will have their spending count towards the cap.

However, because access to

services is rationed to people with high care needs, around 1.5m older people won't even be in the system and any expenses they incur will not count towards the cap.

Those in a care home will also have to pay for accommodation costs.

The average cost of a care home place in England is £574 a week, but £230 of everyone's fees does not go towards the

cap as it is for living costs.

Finally, an individual's bill only racks up at the rate a council would pay for a place in the care home and not what they are actually paying.

Many care home providers say this does not cover the true cost of care so they charge people funding themselves more.

That is why by the time a person reaches the cap they may have paid much more.

Winter deaths hit high

Figures from the Office for National Statistics suggest that by March 31, the number of winter deaths will have surpassed 2008-2009's flu-hit toll of 36,450 toll, making it the worst since 1999-2000's landmark peak of 48,440.

The statistics suggest that one older person could die every seven minutes from the cold.

Whilst the cold weather is a major factor in the winter death figure, the UK also has around one million

older people living in fuel poverty who simply cannot afford to heat their homes to a temperature high enough to keep warm and well.

Fuel poverty also causes severe ill health, with an annual cost to the NHS of £1.36bn.

The NPC is calling for the government to commit to improving the energy efficiency of homes, raise the winter fuel allowance and tackle the profits of the energy companies.

You can now keep up to date with all the NPC's activities by following us on Twitter @NPCUK.

Remembering Joe Harris

The NPC was sad to learn of the death in February of former general secretary, Joe Harris.

A regular speaker at meetings across the country, at the annual Pensioners' Parliament and in discussions with ministers; Joe was widely respected for his intellect and campaigning spirit.

In 2005, he helped create the first Pensioners' Charter, and three years later was responsible for marking the centenary of the state



Joe Harris speaking in Blackpool in 2005

pension.

Much of this work found its way into two important publications: The Battle for the Old

Age Pension and Paupers' Progress.

He will be sadly missed by the pensioners' movement.